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THE HIGHER LIFE OF OAKLAND.*

"He hath prepared for them a city"
—Heb. 11, 16.

OUR human life began, the Bible says, in a garden. We turn back and see the members of that first family moving among the trees, picking fruit, finding a serpent, gathering leaves and grass out of which they wove their primitive garments! The whole picture is simple, undeveloped, aboriginal!

But at the other end of the Bible we find a picture of human life, trained, matured, redeemed, and here its home was in a city! "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," John cries, "and I saw a holy city!" It had walls great and high; it had twelve gates serving as outlets and inlets for its mighty life: it had the glory and honor of the nations throbbing in its splendid corporate activity. Human life had become close-knit, highly organized, strongly developed, and its natural home was in the city. This final vision recorded in holy

*This sermon was preached in the First Congregational Church, Oakland, California, on Church Extension Sunday November 22d, 1903.

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writ represents the later, the harder and the holier ideal.

In similar vein, the author of my text makes bold to say that this massing of population in cities, with all the attendant problems and difficulties, is not, as many persons are saying, a thing to be deplored but rather a divine purpose for the race. "God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city." The Lord is not ashamed nor afraid to face the risks of this intensely social life—He has, in anticipation of this higher development of social organization, "prepared for them a city." The massing of population lies within this cherished purpose and if John's vision is sound, the ultimate expression of his redemptive energy will be found in the creation of a splendid city life.

We rejoice in the high confidence of this seer for the city as a social fact is simply inevitable. Certain industrial forces are here and here to stay, which make imperative the gathering of people into groups rather than the scattering of them in the isolation of country life. The social and educational stimulus of the city is such that the stronger and more aspiring minds in the country find it hard to resist the attraction—they are heading for the city in multitudes. The lawless and the helpless also drift into the city—it is the only place they can live. My father who has lived

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for thirty-nine years in a thickly populated farming region of the middle west, never locks his doors by day or by night, and not so much as a silver spoon has ever disappeared. There is no one there to steal. And in all that time, he remembers but one occasion when any one came to the door to beg. The city draws off the lawless and the helpless, leaving the country free but swelling the gravity of its own problems. Yet straight in the face of all these problems, the author clings to the ideal that this fuller, harder life is the divine ideal—"He hath prepared for them a city."

We applaud his courage and in our heart of hearts we all endorse his claim. The ideal condition in life is not simple, easy, innocent isolation, but righteous and brotherly co-operation in a highly organized society. The touch and rub of mind on mind, of heart on heart, gives glow and vigor. We stand ready to thank God that heaven is not pictured as a lonely monastery in the mountains, nor as a green field in some secluded valley, but as a city, walled, gated, busy, the glory and honor of whole nations feeding its splendid strength. Dying, for a Christian, is going to a city. The beatific vision, when the pure in heart shall see God, is to be accomplished in a city. The finest preparation therefore for that richer experience will come through learning how to live and work as Christians in a city. We

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are here to practice citizenship, to cultivate public spirit, to develop the habit of service, to learn to subordinate the private interest to the larger good, for such is the type of character that is profitable for the life that now is and for the life that is to come. He has prepared for us a city and His redemption is being accomplished in training us to face the obligations and meet the demands of city life.

Let me take these thoughts of the prophet then and apply them to our own city in speaking to you this morning about "The Higher Life of Oakland." Some things have been accomplished here; others are in process of realization; and yet others wait for our fuller co-operation with the gracious purposes of God.

He has prepared for us a city and in physical situation the work is nobly done. Here we stand where land and sea meet, beside earth's largest ocean, facing its greatest populations. Yonder the mouths and minds of millions of our fellow beings are just opening to the supplies which will feed their undeveloped strength into a mightier life! We have before us in China and in Siberia, in Japan and in the Philippines, in all the Islands of the sea, an awakening hunger, a growing demand, an actual opportunity that the conservative mind hesitates to describe lest he be

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thought wild. We have behind us the most energetic nation on earth with resources sufficient to meet that unprecedented opportunity. Here we stand on the finest and most advantageously placed harbor between Cape Horn and Behring's Strait, looking out upon that mightiest of oceans and those teeming populations! The hour has struck, the performance is beginning, and all minds that are awake and alert, are aware that in physical situation and actual opportunity, God has prepared for those who dwell around this Bay, a wonderful city!

And what advantages in scene and climate are offered us as we undertake this work! We have a climate which knows how to be balmy without making men lazy; it knows how to be tonic and stimulating without being rough or harsh. He hath prepared for us in the air we breathe, in the winds that blow, in the skies that smile upon us, in all those natural elements which greet us as friends and not as foes, an ideal situation for a city!

And the beauty of it! Many of you have sailed into the Bay of Naples. It is loveliness itself with the blue Italian sky above and the blue waters of the Mediterranean below. The ruined villas along the shore people it with historic memories! The buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum, now uncovered by the spade, carry us back to Roman times!

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Vesuvius beyond, smouldering and smoking, hurries our minds away to that prehistoric period when the earth came up out of its primordial fire, taking solid, definite shape as an abode for men! All this is full of interest indeed, but once take away the poetry and the historic associations of the Bay of Naples, and it lies surpassed in natural beauty and splendid opportunity by this Bay before us. Here on these slopes, men are destined to build a city that will appeal to the sense of beauty, to the active imagination, to the man of commercial insight and to the eye of the statesman, with a charm irresistible! In sure and solid anticipation of what is yet to be, we may cry with the prophet of old, "He hath prepared for us a city."

In mental stimulus and opportunity also our city stands well. Oakland has been from the first, a city of books and of schools. California College out of which has come the University at Berkeley began just yonder in our midst. Numbers of private schools and seminaries have been doing and are yet doing a work superb in its effect upon the youth of our city. The public school system crowned by our splendid High School is drawing families from all over the State bent upon gaining for their children the best that offers. Near at hand is the University of California, winning its place among the leading Universities of

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the land, its students seen daily upon our streets, within our homes and about our churches. And in the larger Oakland, as a gem among the lovely foothills behind us, Mills College, honored and useful for the work it is already doing, stands as the sure promise and beginning of that Woman's College which shall be to this Coast what Holyoke and Vassar, Smith and Wellesley have been to the older sections of our land. The patient, steady, irresistible forces of education are everywhere in evidence and through them all God is preparing a city that shall have large place in training minds that are to think His thoughts after Him.

In other ways as well the city makes its appeal to the higher mental life. The Public Library with its thousands of volumes, well-chosen, well-housed, well-used, is bringing young and old, rich and poor, into daily fellowship with the best poets and philosophers, the best historians and biographers, the best travelers and story tellers of all the ages. Those musical clubs and these great chorus choirs in our central churches, which are the wonder and the envy of our neighbors across the bay and which bear comparison with the musical organizations of the East, are steadily cultivating the taste of the people for finer melody and harmony. The generous hospitality of our many lovely homes, thoughtful,

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tasteful, winsome, is constantly enriching the social privileges of all who have the will and the wisdom to enjoy these advantages. In all these and in other ways God is preparing for us a city whose intelligence and charm shall be a useful factor in the life of California.

The moral purpose and spiritual quality of our city must then be made to match its other advantages. In the small amount of flagrant vice or of bitter, hopeless poverty our city ranks well. The generous interest of our people in all forms of humane and philanthropic activity is to its praise and honor. Fabiola Hospital, The King's Daughters' Home for Invalids, our well organized and well-administered Associated Charities, the several Homes for the aged and for children, maintained in such comfort and kindliness as to merit the name of "Homes,"—all these testify to the unselfishness of our people! A noble work in our community for the Christian nurture and training of orphan girls has been so wisely original, so genuinely and beautifully effective, as to draw attention to itself clear across the continent and beyond. When the Master said, "Inasmuch as ye do it to the sick and the needy, the neglected and the forgotten lives, ye do it unto Me," the people of Oakland were listening and they caught the spirit of unselfish service embodied in His

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gracious words! When God casts His eye over the needy ones which are and which are to come, He may feel that He is preparing for them here a city!

But in certain other regards there remaineth yet much land to be possessed by moral energy and spiritual aim. There has been among us a sore lack of public spirit. You have seen in other years—we hope they are passing—an unworthy reluctance on the part of strong, good men to give time, thought and effort to civic affairs. The common excuse was that they could not spare the time from their business.

Washington Gladden says, "A man might as well say that he could not spare the time from his business to attend his daughter's wedding or his mother's funeral." Sure enough! Are not these civic matters that affect the health, the safety, the wellbeing of thousands of people; that determine the security of their property, from fire and thieves; that relate to the efficiency of those public schools which are training the youth of our city for the battle of life; that have to do with the stamping out of abominations which menace the moral health of the boys and girls; that underlie the growth and development of our industrial life on which thousands depend for daily bread—are not these matters all as vital, as the proper cele-

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bration of a daughter's bridal or the paying of respect to the memory of a mother! This is *our* city and *ours* is the responsibility for making it in all its interests, the city God in His providence intended it to be.

There has been shameful unwillingness on the part of many to co-operate with men of vision and enterprise in enlarging the commercial possibilities of our city. Many "knockers" have been ready to shake their wise old heads and predict failure for every forward movement projected; too few have been ready to take hold with heart and courage, working for those larger interests that would benefit the whole community. I remember hearing a former Mayor say, "Too many of our people in Oakland are ready to sit down and swap nickels with each other in the hope of getting a brighter and a heavier nickel than the one they traded off; too few are ready to spend and invest their nickels in the hope of gaining dollars by and by."

We rejoice, however, that better days have come. There is a growing spirit of co-operation in the air; there is a deepening public spirit; there is a new faith in the wisdom of those men of larger view and bolder undertakings. We are all members one of another. If one member prosper, in any legitimate way whatsoever, all the members prosper with him. If

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one member suffer through personal timidity, through lack of the co-operative spirit, through want of confidence in the larger endeavor, all the members suffer with him. There is a clear advantage always in "standing together" whether it be in a pack of wolves, a football team, a board of Bank Directors or the citizens of a city. If we move together in the spirit of hearty loyalty to the larger good, we cannot fail to win the city God in anticipation has prepared for us.

There has been a lack of steady aggressiveness in our moral efforts. Oakland's enthusiasm has come in spurts rather than in a steady stream. It has been easy to arouse a show of moral determination sufficient to close up an unusually disreputable saloon; the single battle has been readily won. We then settled back comfortably in our pews and there was a lack of staying quality sufficient to wage a victorious war against all that imperils the honesty, decency and sobriety of our city life.

Why do we still hear the hateful click of these "nickel-in-the-slot" machines? Kindergartens in gambling they are—once their lesson well learned, there follows the poker table, the race track, and a ruined life! I hate gambling in every form. I believe God hates it, for the habit of mind which is always seeking to get something for nothing

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through another's loss, undermines all honest, virile manhood. We are told on high authority that it would be illegal to pass an ordinance prohibiting these machines because the matter is already covered by State law. Then why is the State law not enforced? The courts have rendered just such a decision in Fresno and there the State law is enforced and the slot machines have been driven out. Is it too much for Oakland to banish these gambling devices from the street corners where they stand openly flaunting their nefarious work in the face of the public?

Why are not the private side rooms swept out of these rum shops, parading under the name of "restaurants," kept as a rule by Slavs for the corrupting of American life? Would you know the moral ruin being wrought there under cover, go and talk with some of the waiters! These men are tipped and paid not to see the wickedness of these plague spots, but sometimes they are impelled to speak out in protest. An ordinary saloon, where men sit or stand in the open drinking their liquor, is one thing—bad enough indeed but existing by the will of the people; these abominable side rooms where young girls are being taken under cover and plied with drink and drugs to their downfall are quite another thing and it is not the will of our people that they should ply their foul trade! Is there

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not enough moral stamina in our city to demand that this abominable business shall stop!

"There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God"—and every city is ideally a city of God. That river is not the Sacramento nor the San Joaquin; not the Nile, the Euphrates nor even the sacred Jordan—it is not a thing solely of the earth. It is the stream of moral purpose in the life of a people blending with the spiritual energy of Almighty God, a stream that must flow though the streets and through the entire corporate life of the city making it a joyous, wholesome dwelling place for the children of the Most High.

I would not advocate extremes; I do not urge that we attempt the impossible; I will not insist upon measures that would be divisive of the best sentiment of our city. But I do urge with all my might, that whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are decent, whatsoever things are of good report, these things and these only shall have the permissive sanction of our city life! And if any man sets his will or his influence or his institution in the way of our common insistence upon that honesty and decency, then he must be made to suffer. May God prepare for us a city where the moral determination shall not be ashamed nor afraid to insist that the will

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of the clean-minded majority shall be done?

And once more there has been among us a lack of vital fellowship between the larger and the smaller churches. The Church Universal in Oakland has grown strong at the center, but at the expense of the circumference. The heart has been full of hot blood, sometimes almost to congestion, while the hands and feet have been cold. These strong downtown churches with the attraction of good buildings and fine music, with the stimulus of a great service and immense congregations, have been drawing from all quarters to the detriment of our smaller churches in the outskirts. The time has come for us to render back to those regions, in more generous measure, such supplies of money, of men and of loving fellowship as will aid in making the weak, strong.

The demand everywhere is for effective churches, well appointed, with noble, inspiring music, with intelligent and helpful preaching. Thousands of our people will not and ought not to pay street car fare to come down town, and if the churches near them are feeble and ineffective, they will remain unchurched. Yet they need this same Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in which we here rejoice. Children are being born into all those homes for whom the parents desire the best influences to be had in safeguarding their lives and

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building their characters in righteousness. Loved ones are dying out of all those homes, and the sorrowing heart needs the same comfort that you found here in your bereavement. Young people are growing up and they need the same ideals, helps and inspirations, offered steadily to the youth of this church through its unceasing service. The human heart is one the world over and everywhere it craves the very things in which you have found comfort, uplift and help.

The three great perils of city life are, I believe, lack of respect for law, both human and divine; lack of regard for the rights of others; lack of fidelity to promise and obligation. If the higher, holier and more powerful sanctions of religion were once removed or neglected, how much more terrible would this lack of respect for law, this want of regard for others' rights, this lack of fidelity to promise and obligation become! The only sure foundation, on which these three fine qualities can be built among the masses, is a sense of personal responsibility to God and an abiding good will toward men consequent upon daily fellowship with the Savior of mankind. And to this end strong and wise, useful and aspiring churches are imperative necessities in all those sections of our growing city life!

The man of faith who set out to find or to found the city which God had prepared for

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him, "looked for a city that had foundations, whose builder and Maker was God." He would build his city not on sand nor on dirt, not on changing mood nor fleeting impulse; he would build it upon the rock foundation of individual responsibility to God. "He that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them," Jesus said, "is building his house upon the rock; the storms may come, the winds blow, and the floods beat upon that house, it will fall not for it is founded upon a rock!" The same sure foundation is demanded for the peace of home life, for the underlying principles of educational work, for the maintenance of right industrial methods, for the cleansing of the body politic—all these at last must rest upon sincere and loving loyalty to the teachings of Him who came to prepare for us an eternal city, from which at last we shall go no more out.

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